

Surah Mulk

A Brief Analysis of the Sūrahs of the Seventh Group

With Sūrah Mulk begins the seventh and last group of the Qur'ān. The *sūrahs* of this group too are arranged in the same manner as they are arranged in the previous ones. The Makkan Sūrahs precede the few Madīnan Sūrahs. The latter is related to the former as a branch is related to its stem.

There is a difference in opinion regarding the Makkan or Madīnan identity of some *sūrahs*. It is thus difficult to say beforehand where the former end and the latter begin. It is only after the analysis of all these *sūrahs* that a definite opinion can be given in this regard. However, my preliminary opinion is that forty three *sūrahs* from Sūrah Mulk to Sūrah Kāfirūn are Makkan and the rest from Sūrah Nāṣr to Sūrah Nās are Madīnan.

Like all the previous groups, in this group also the fundamentals of the Qur'ānic message: monotheism, prophethood and hereafter have been discussed, and there exists a mention of all the phases of preaching in it. However, the real subject matter of the whole group is *indhār* (warning). Most *sūrahs* of this group belong to the early Makkan period, and the style of *indhār* adopted in them is the same as was adopted by Muḥammad (sws) atop the hillock of Ṣafā. As a requisite of this *indhār*, a portrayal of the events of the Day of Judgement is made in this group; the punishment which necessarily comes as a result of rejecting a Messenger of God is depicted in such a manner as if the Quraysh can see it from their very eyes. The arguments used are based on established facts of history and manifest signs found in the world within man and the one around him. The force in the discourse is like the roar of thunder and the bolt of lightning that shakes and jolts everyone.

Such was the upheaval caused by these *sūrahs* in the whole of Arabia that not a singular person remained neutral about the message of the Qur'ān: he either became its great enemy or its great advocate; finally, the clash that took place between these two categories of people culminated in the dominance of the truth which is mentioned at the end of every group, and is also mentioned at the end of this group.

While beginning the *tafsīr* of the seventh group, I would like to cite the following verse of Sūrah Hījir: (٨٧ : ١٥) وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ (and [O Prophet!] We have bestowed upon you seven *mathānī* which is

this great Qur'ān, (15:87)). I had mentioned this in the foreword of this *tafsīr* after introducing the seven groups. The purpose was to show that this division into seven groups is sanctioned by the Qur'ān itself. Then, while explaining the above verse in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Hījr, I had tried to substantiate the following premises:

Firstly, the Qur'ān has not called any specific *sūrah* as the *sab' mathānī*. In fact, the words (:) كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِي show that the whole of the Qur'ān is *sab' mathānī*.

Secondly, the word *mathānī* does not refer to something which is often repeated; it refers to something which occurs in pairs.

Thirdly, it is evident from the arrangement of the *sūrahs* in the Qur'ān that they are divided into seven groups and *sūrahs* occur in pairs towards which I have been continuously alluding in this *tafsīr*.

A reminder of the above points here is meant to convey to the reader that he can now judge whether what is said in these points holds water or not and whether new frontiers of knowledge have opened as a result of this arrangement of the Qur'ān or not.

In my opinion, it is to this very arrangement of the Qur'ān that the following narrative of 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd (rta) reported from the Prophet (sws) points to: أَنزَلَ الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى سَبْعَةِ أَحْرَفٍ (the Qur'ān has been revealed on seven *ahruf*).¹ If the expression seven *ahruf* is interpreted to mean that all the words of the Qur'ān can be read in seven ways, then this is an obviously wrong interpretation. In this case, the Qur'ān would become an enigma, even though as per its own words it is revealed in lucid Arabic, and the pure language of the Quraysh. Even people who give importance to variant readings cannot claim that a word of the Qur'ān has been read in seven ways. Ibn Jarīr has generously quoted variant readings, yet I don't remember him quoting more than two or three readings of a word.

Further deliberation shows that difference in readings is not in fact a difference in readings; most of it relates to difference in interpretation. At times, an early authority has used a word to explain a Qur'ānic word, and this explanatory word itself came to be regarded as a variant reading of the original word. It was clear that this word was not a new reading of the word; it was only meant to explain it. In the previous *sūrah*, it has been indicated that some people read فَقَدْ رَأَعَتْ as فَقَدْ صَعَتْ. It is obvious that whoever did so was not informing us of a new variant of the word; he was only telling the meaning of فَقَدْ صَعَتْ. Incidentally, I have also shown in the light of ancient classical Arabic literature how wrong this meaning is.

1. Abū Ya'lā, *Musnad*. 1st ed. vol. 9 (Damascus: Dār al-mā'mūn li al-turāth, 1984), 278..

Another thing which needs to be kept in consideration is that even if there are variant readings, the *mutawātir* reading is only that which is found with people and written in all the codices found with the *ummah*. Obviously, all other readings are not *mutawātir* and are *shādh* (rare), and cannot be given importance to in the presence of the *mutawātir* reading. For this reason, I have not entertained variant readings while writing this *tafsīr*, and have adopted the reading of the *muṣḥaf*. At no place did I need to artificially adjust an interpretation; at all places a very clear and lucid interpretation in the light of the context and parallels of the Qur’ān came to surface which was the real objective. Entertaining variant readings would only mean that we are inviting those doubts to find root in us which Abū Bakr (rta) and ‘Umar (rta) had long ago rid us of forever.

Nevertheless, there is no reason to interpret the narrative of seven *ahruf* as seven readings; however if the word *ḥarf* (singular of *ahruf*) is interpreted as “a writing, a discourse or a style” which has full sanction from lexicons as well as usage, then the narrative would mean that the Qur’ān has been revealed on seven styles or seven writings, and this would indeed be a reference to the seven groups which every reader of the Qur’ān can clearly see in it.

I have already explained the nature of these groups. In each of them, under a comprehensive central theme, all the basic meanings of the Qur’ānic preaching are mentioned in various styles in such a manner that in spite of repetition, a reader does not feel tired of the discourse. However because of a variation and variety in style and nature of arguments, in preceding and succeeding verses, in the implications and consequences of verses, a reader is introduced with a new flavour and taste. Some narratives while pointing to this very feature of the Qur’ān say that students of the Qur’ān will never be able to fully quench their thirst, and its freshness will never become stale. Together these seven groups form the (۸۷:۱۵) وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ (and the great Qur’ān, (15:87)) mentioned in Sūrah Hījr. The particle وَ as I have explained in the *tafsīr* of the *sūrah*, is for explication.

Central Theme

The central theme of this *sūrah* is *indhār* (warning) and this includes *indhār* regarding both types of punishment: the punishment which the rejecters of a Messenger of God face in this world, and the punishment they will have to face in the Hereafter. The arguments are drawn from the signs of God in the world around man. It has been told in this *sūrah* that an observation of this world highlights those attributes of God which necessitate the fact that this world shall one day reach its culmination. People who led their lives while being slaves to their desires and did not

use their intellect will be cast into Hell, and those who used their intellect, and feared the Almighty even though they had not seen Him will become worthy of great reward.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-5): A close scrutiny of the universe reveals that its sovereign is a Blessed and Powerful Being. He has created life and death with a purpose, and it is not that this world is to continue like this forever or suddenly end: the world has been created as a trial and test for man as to who adopts the right path and who the wrong one. A necessary outcome of this trial is that a Day should come wherein the righteous be rewarded and the rebellious be punished. If this universe is carefully observed to view the profound power and blessings of its Creator, not even a minor flaw can be pointed out in its great expanse. Repeated observations will only second this inference. The nearest of the seven skies has been adorned with stars by the Almighty; they serve the dual purpose of guiding people in their journeys and pelting Satan and his army if they try to overhear something revealed by God.

Verses (6-11): The power and providence of the Almighty so evident in this universe bears evidence that those who deny the Day of Reward and Punishment will have to face the torment of Hell. It will roar and shriek like a hungry lion when it sees them. Whenever a group of these rebellious people will be flung in Hell, its gate-keepers will ask them whether a warner had ever warned them of this punishment. They would admit that a warner did come to them but they rejected him and had replied that the Almighty had revealed nothing and that whoever believed that the Almighty has revealed anything have, in fact, deviated from the right path. They would also confess that they had never tried to listen to and understand what had been said to them, otherwise they would not have met this fate.

Verses (12-14): A mention of the fact that people who remain fearful of their Lord in this world shall be rewarded. They are assured that all their virtuous deeds are in the knowledge of Allah and He shall duly reward them. He is the Creator of all and has knowledge of everything and is very discerning and nothing is hidden from Him.

Verses (15-18): This earth has been created by the Almighty as very obedient and submissive to man. Its very creation and existence is a source of reminder for man of a great reality: he should roam about in it and fully benefit from all its pleasures and facilities but should always keep in mind that these privileges entail a day of accountability before the Almighty; not even for a moment should a person become unmindful of his Lord's grasp and should always remember that whenever the

Almighty intends, He can destroy him by sending on him a natural calamity. History also depicts exemplary incidents of this.

Verses (19-21): Man is warned that whatever is suspended in the unfathomable skies is held by the Almighty. He is watching over everything. If someone is deprived of His assistance and support, no one will be able to help him. If He deprives someone of sustenance, no one will be able to help that person. If He deprives a person of sustenance, no one can grant him sustenance.

Verses (22-23): Those who lead their lives while remaining a slave to their desires will never reach the real goal. Only they will reach this goal who remain on the right path. The Almighty has endowed people with the faculties of sight, hearing and reasoning so that people can remain on the right path by using them. But alas! very few people understand the worth of such favours.

Verses (25-27): The Almighty has scattered mankind all over this earth and He Himself shall definitely gather them one day. The Prophet (sws) is told to inform the disbelievers that only Allah knows when the Day of Judgement will come and that he himself has no knowledge of its time of arrival; he has only been sent to warn them about it and not to inform them about its time of arrival. However, when the Day does arrive, the faces of the disbelievers will turn black with gloom.

Verses (28-30): If these disbelievers are awaiting the change of fortunes for the Prophet (sws) and his Companions, and if it is supposed that this change does happen, then why should they themselves rest assured? They shall certainly meet the dreadful fate they have been informed of.

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١) الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَفُورُ (٢) الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا مَّا تَرَى فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَنِ مِنْ تَفَافُوتٍ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَى مِنْ فُطُورٍ (٣) ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ حَسِيرٌ (٤) وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا لِلشَّيَاطِينِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابَ السَّعِيرِ (٥) وَلِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (٦) إِذَا أُلْقُوا فِيهَا سَمِعُوا لَهَا شَهِيقًا وَهِيَ تَفُورُ (٧) تَكَادُ تَمَيَّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ كُلَّمَا أُلْقِيَ فِيهَا فَوْجٌ سَأَلَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَذِيرٌ (٨) قَالُوا بَلَى قَدْ

جَاءَنَا نَذِيرٌ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ كَبِيرٍ (٩) وَقَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ (١٠) فَاعْتَرَفُوا بِذَنبِهِمْ فَسُحْقًا لِأَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ (١١) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ (١٢) وَأَسِرُوا قَوْلَكُمْ أَوِ اجْهَرُوا بِهِ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (١٣) أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ (١٤) هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذُلُولًا فَامْشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِنْ رِزْقِهِ وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ (١٥) أَلَمْ أَنْتُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورُ (١٦) أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ مِّنَ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ كَيْفَ نَذِيرِ (١٧) وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ (١٨) أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الظَّيْرِ فَوْقَهُمْ صَاعَاتٍ وَيَقْبِضْنَ مَا يُمَسِّكُهُنَّ إِلَّا الرَّحْمَنُ إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ بَصِيرٌ (١٩) أَمَّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي هُوَ جُنْدٌ لَّكُمْ يَنْصُرُكُم مِّنْ دُونِ الرَّحْمَنِ إِنِ الْكَافِرُونَ إِلَّا فِي غُرُورٍ (٢٠) أَمَّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي يَرْزُقُكُمْ إِنْ أَمْسَكَ رِزْقَهُ بَلْ لَجُّوا فِي عُتُوٍّ وَنُفُورٍ (٢١) أَفَمَن يَمِشِي مُكِبًّا عَلَى وَجْهِهِ أَهْدَى أَمَّن يَمِشِي سَوِيًّا عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ (٢٢) قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ (٢٣) قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي ذَرَأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ (٢٤) وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٢٥) قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ (٢٦) فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ زُلْفَةً سَيِئَتْ وُجُوهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَقِيلَ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَدَّعُونَ (٢٧) قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَهْلَكَنِيَ اللَّهُ وَمَن مَّعِيَ أَوْ رَحِمَنَا فَمَن يُجِيرُ الْكَافِرِينَ مِنْ عَذَابِ أَلِيمٍ (٢٨) قُلْ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ أَمَّنَّا بِهِ وَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ هُوَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ (٢٩) قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَصْبَحَ مَاؤُكُمْ غَوْرًا فَمَن يَأْتِيكُم بِمَاءٍ مَّعِينٍ (٣٠)

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

Very Great and very Benevolent is He in whose hands is the dominion of the worlds, and He has power over all things. Who created death and life that He might test you as to which of you is best regarding deeds. And He is also Mighty and Forgiving. (1-2)

He Who created seven heavens one above the other. You will not find any fault with what has been created by the Most Gracious. Look about: can you see any flaw? Look again and again. Your look will come back to you worn out and overcome. (3-4)

And We have adorned the lowest heaven with lamps and made them an abode for bombardment on the devils. And We have also prepared for

these devils the torment of the Blazing Fire. And those who denied their Lord, for them is the torment of Hell and what an evil abode it is! (5-6)

When they will be cast into it, they shall hear it roaring and seething. It will almost be bursting with rage. Every time a multitude of theirs is cast into it, its keepers will ask them: "Did no warner come to you to warn you about this Day?" They will say: "A warner did come but we rejected him and said: 'God has not sent down anything; you are only in grave error.'" And they will say: "If only we had listened or used our intellect, we would not have been among the dwellers of Hell." And they will confess their sin; so cursed be these companions of Hell. (7-11)

Indeed, those who feared their Lord even though they did not see Him, there is indeed forgiveness and a great reward. And whether you speak secretly or openly, He indeed has full knowledge of all that is in the hearts. Would He not know Who has created? He is Very Discerning and Well-Acquainted. (12-14)

He Who made the earth an obedient camel; so walk about in its shoulders and eat from your Lord's subsistence and You shall then gather before Him. (15)

Are you not afraid of Him Who is in the heavens that He may thrust you in the earth and it suddenly start running swiftly. Are you not afraid of Him Who is in the heavens that He may send upon you a stone-hurling wind so that you know how My warning is. And those also who were before them denied; so see how terrible was my curse. (16-18)

Have they not seen the birds above them. They fly with outstretched wings, and they also draw them in. None except the Most Gracious is holding them. Indeed, He keeps a watch on all things. (19)

Speak up: "What army do you have who will help you against the Most Gracious?" These disbelievers are in mere deception. Speak up: "Who will give you sustenance if He withholds His sustenance?" In fact, these people have become persistent in rebellion and in evading the truth. (20-21)

He who walks with his face down rightly guided or he who walks upright on a straight path? Tell them: "It is He Who has created you, and made for you ears, eyes and hearts. Yet seldom are you grateful." Tell them: "It is He who has scattered you in the earth and towards Him you shall be gathered." (22-24)

And they say: "When will this threat materialize if you are truthful?" Tell them: "Its knowledge is only with Allah and I am only an open warner." So when they see it drawing near, the faces of these disbelievers will turn gloomy and it shall be said to them: "This is what you had been asking for." (25-27)

Ask them: "Have you ever thought that if Allah destroys me and my companions or has mercy on us who shall save the disbelievers from an

afflictive doom?" (28)

Tell them: "He is the Most Gracious. We have professed faith in Him and in Him we have put our trust so soon you will know who is in manifest error." Ask them: "Speak up, if all the water you have sinks down into the earth, who will then bring out clean and pure water for you."

Explanation

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ² (١)

The word تَبَارَكَ encompasses the meanings of greatness and benevolence. Moreover, the word تَبَارَكَ is a hyperbolic emphasized form (*mubālaghah*).³ Hence the translation above. The second part of the verse says that besides these attributes, it not beyond Him to accomplish the greatest and the most difficult of tasks that can be imagined.

This is the observation or should be the result of the observation made by a serious and upright person when he reflects on the signs of this world. The reason is stated subsequently. Here only a summary of his view is stated beforehand so that this fact comes before every person that everyone who reflects on this world will come to the conclusion that its Creator has created it for His entertainment and enjoyment or as an irresponsible or unconcerned creator did create this world, but after that has no concern with the good and evil which goes on in it or that He is only the first prime-mover and has no concern with what came into being through Him or is a silent first cause which has no relationship with the effects except merely being the first cause.

Such concepts about the Creator of this universe were formed by people either because they did not want to form a correct view about Him or because this view should not intervene in their base desires or they did want to form a correct opinion but instead of observing His attributes in the huge universe He had created they tried to view them through the small spectacles they had invented themselves. Whereas the correct way was only one: they should have observed the world without any bias and prejudice and seen the reflection of His attributes in them. If they had done this, they would have realized that their Creator is very great and very benevolent and very wise; moreover He has profound power. He can do whatever He wants to; no task is difficult or impossible for Him. Obviously, this concept of God negates about Him all erroneous concepts

2. Very Great and very Benevolent is He in whose hands is the dominion of the worlds, and He has power over all things.

3. I have explained in detail the meanings and implications of this word under verses 1, 10 and 61 of Sūrah Furqān.

with which idolatrous nations were afflicted, and also no possibility remains for the doubts with which philosophers and scientists were plagued with.

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَفُورُ⁴

In this verse, what is said in the previous verse is re-stated which throws further light on His power, wisdom and benevolence. Death and life have been created by Him, and no one else can create the two; the fact that death precedes life this shows that everything has come into being from nothingness because of God's power and mercy; had He not wanted nothing could have come into being. Life after nothingness and then death after life, bear testimony to the fact that this world has been created with a purpose and that it is not correct to construe that it will continue endlessly like this or suddenly end. If this was so, then this world would be a purposeless creation, which is against the majesty of a wise, powerful and benevolent creator. On the contrary, this is evidence to the fact that whomever the Almighty blesses with life He does so to test and try him; the test is whether this person spends his life to please the Almighty or to please his own base desires. A natural outcome of this test is that He bring about one day in which He give life to everyone, take their account and then reward or punish them accordingly.

The verse says that God is الْعَزِيزُ (powerful), which means that no one can save people who are worthy of punishment from God's grasp; He is also الْعَفُورُ (forgiving) which means that He will not deprive people who are worthy of His forgiveness from His mercy and they will be regarded as its worthy recipients without any effort or intercession.

الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا مَّا تَرَى فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَنِ مِنْ تَفَافُوتٍ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَى مِنْ فُطُورٍ⁽³⁾ ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ حَسِيرٌ⁽⁴⁾

In this verse, man is invited to observe the power, benevolence and providence of God which is referred to in the first verse. People should see His profound majesty and grandeur, and His unparalleled creativity. The quintessence of His creativity is that He created seven heavens one

4. Who created death and life that He might test you as to which of you is best regarding deeds. And He is also Mighty and Forgiving.

5. He Who created seven heavens one above the other. You will not find any fault with what has been created by the Most Gracious. Look about: can you see any flaw? Look again and again. Your look will come back to you worn out and overcome.

above the other. They are perfect and flawless. Can there be something greater in expanse than the heavens? Not even the most accomplished of architects or builders can dare point the slightest flaw in these super structures. The word تَفَاوُتٌ means “discrepancy, difference and incongruity”. This subject is alluded to again by the word فُظُورٌ which means “flaw and fissure.” In Sūrah Qāf, the word فُرُوجٌ is used for this purpose: (٦:٥٠) أَفَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوا إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَوْقَهُمْ كَيْفَ بَنَيْنَاهَا وَزَيَّنَّاهَا وَمَا لَهَا مِنْ فُرُوجٍ (Have they never observed the sky above them, and seen how We built it and perfected and left no fissures in its expanse? (50:6)).

The words ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ حَسِيرٌ once again call people to look at the perfect structure of the heavens in a manner that they are left with no excuse to deny it. Repeated critical observation will leave the sight worn out and it will not be able to discover the slightest of flaws anywhere. The implied meaning is that how can any task be difficult for the God whose profound power and mercy man sees all around him and is unable to estimate their countless manifestations and is also unable to see the slightest of flaw in them. Is creating man a second time and treating him in accordance with his deeds or destroying him through a natural calamity in this world in the blink of an eye more difficult than creating the heavens?

وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا لِلشَّيَاطِينِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابَ السَّعِيرِ (٥)⁶

After referring to the seven heavens, attention is directed at the lowest heaven because its wonders can be relatively easily observed. Viewing these lamps will lead man to the conclusion that his Creator is not only powerful, He is merciful as well; He has embellished the roof of the lowest heaven with such lamps which are beautiful to look at and which also are beneficial to mankind. Earlier in verse three, the attribute of الرَّحْمَنُ (the Gracious) was mentioned in تَفَاوُتٍ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ (the Gracious). This is a reference to this attribute of God. It is as if this world from its very structure and existence does bear witness merely to the fact that it has been created by someone who has immense power, it simultaneously bears witness that the creator is very gracious, benevolent and hospitable Who has decorated the roof with such grand lamps. God's attribute of الرَّحْمَنُ (the Gracious) is mentioned in this *sūrah* time and again. It is essential to give due consideration to it otherwise the real majesty of the discourse will be lost sight of.

The words وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا لِلشَّيَاطِينِ depict a secondary benefit of these

6. And We have adorned the lowest heaven with lamps and made them an abode for bombardment on the devils. And We have also prepared for these devils the torment of the Blazing Fire.

stars: the Almighty uses them as platforms to bombard the devils. This briefly referred to phenomenon is explained at other places in the Qur'ān: in these stars, the Almighty has made forts and castles (*burīj*) which are guarded by angels. If devils try to rise in the skies to eavesdrop on a revelation being sent down, they pelt these devils with shooting stars to ward them off. I have explained the nature of these shooting stars in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Raḥmān. Those interested in details can look it up.

A mention of this bombardment in this *sūrah* is meant to tell man that the Almighty, after creating this world with such grandeur and thoroughness, has not left it alone that devils can do whatever they want to; on the contrary, He watches over them; when they try to exceed limits they are checked. This shows that this world has not been left unattended: whoever has created it, is vigilantly guarding it, and one day all men and jinn who had created disorder in this world will meet their fate: the punishment of Hell has been prepared for them: وَأَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابَ السَّعِيرِ.

وَلِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَبُئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ⁷

The discourse shifts from the fate of the devils mentioned above to the fate of men who deny the Almighty. “Denying their Lord” here means denying the Hereafter and the reward and punishment which will take place therein. The reason for this, as I have referred to at many places in this *tafsīr*, is that denying the Hereafter is tantamount to denying all the basic attributes – power, justice, mercy and providence – of God. While denying these attributes, belief in God or disbelief in Him is equivalent. Consequently, on these very grounds, the Qur'ān at various instances has called the Idolaters as *kuffār* even though they never denied God.

The words وَبُئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ are meant to convey the fact that they have chosen a very evil abode for themselves. Certain aspects of this evil element are explained further down in the *sūrah*.

إِذَا أُلْقُوا فِيهَا سَمِعُوا لَهَا شَهِيقًا وَهِيَ تَفُورُ⁸

Hell will roar and growl like a hungry lion when it will see these disbelievers. Its snarls will be at their peak at that time.

تَكَادُ تَمَيِّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ كُلَّمَا أُلْقِيَ فِيهَا فَوْجٌ سَأَلَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَذِيرٌ (٨) قَالُوا بَلَى

7. And those who denied their Lord, for them is the torment of Hell and what an evil abode it is!

8. When they will be cast into it, they shall hear it roaring and seething.

قَدْ جَاءَنَا نَذِيرٌ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ كَبِيرٍ (٩)⁹

This is an expression of Hell's anger. Obviously, the reason for this rage and fury would be that in its view those who spent their lives in indifference, spent it while being blind and deaf. Otherwise there was no dearth of any signs in this world which point to a day of reckoning and neither was it ever devoid of warners. Hence, people who did not benefit from their eyes and ears in spite of being blessed with them do not deserve any sympathy. Thus the keepers of Hell will rebuke them in the manner described in this verse.

The words *إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ كَبِيرٍ* express the fact that not only these people paid no heed to those sent to warn them and did not realize their error they also went as far as to call these warners to be misguided people; they censured these warners for intimidating them by saying that they will be raised to life after they die and will be liable to each and every word they spoke and each and every deed they did and that later they and their forefathers will be cast into Hell.

The pronoun *أَنْتُمْ* (you) is in the plural form even though the noun (*نَذِيرٌ*) it refers to is singular. It is evident from this that these people will confess that they gave this very answer to every person who warned them of the Hereafter whether he was a messenger of God or his follower.

وَقَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ (١٠)¹⁰

This is a further confession they will make; alas they neither opened their ears to the warners who were sent to them nor used their own intellect and hence met this dreadful fate.

فَاعْتَرَفُوا بِذَنبِهِمْ فَسُحْقًا لِأَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ (١١)¹¹

It is this confession on their part which will take them to Hell. Cursed are these wretched people who deliberately did deeds that led them to this dreadful abode.

9. It will almost be bursting with rage. Every time a multitude of theirs is cast into it, its keepers will ask them: Did no warner come to you to warn you about this Day? They will say: A warner did come but we rejected him and said: God has not sent down anything; you are only in grave error.

10. And they will say: If only we had listened or used our intellect, we would not have been among the dwellers of Hell.

11. And they will confess their sin; so cursed be these companions of Hell.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ (١٢)¹²

After a fate of the rejecters of the Day of Judgement is mentioned, the fate of those people is mentioned here who feared God in this world even though they had not seen the Day of Judgement with their eyes. Believing in such a day without seeing it shows how intellectually discerning they were: they did not spend their lives while having shut their ears and eyes and neither did they accept something only after they saw it; on the contrary, they reflected on the signs of this world; they paid heed to those who warned them and deeply reflected on what they advised them. For this reason, they will deserve the great blessings of God. The real test of a person in this world is that by using his intellect and reasoning, he professes belief in what the Almighty has informed him through His prophets. He who succeeded in this test deserves every reward of God, and he who failed in it is like an animal or even worse even though he might be a great philosopher and scientist.

وَأَسِرُّوا قَوْلَكُمْ أَوِ اجْهَرُوا بِهِ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (١٣) أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ (١٤)¹³

These verses can convey both threat or assurance. Here both are implied. They sound a threat to the disbelievers of the Day of Judgement mentioned above: they should not be misconceived by the fact that the Almighty is unaware of some hidden or apparent fact: He is well aware of what is hidden and what is apparent. How can He be unaware of these when He even knows what is in the hearts.

After a mention of the disbelievers of the Day of Judgement, people are mentioned who fear God even though they have not seen Him. For them, these words sound an assurance: whatever they say whether openly or secretly is in God's knowledge. He is fully aware of what they say to Him in the seclusion of night, and is also fully aware of what they do openly in the day and is even aware of what is in their hearts. So when nothing is hidden from Him, they should rest assured that the minutest of virtuous deeds will not go unnoticed; they shall be fully rewarded for each and every deed they do.

The words أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ mention the reason why the

12. Indeed, those who feared their Lord even though they did not see Him, there is indeed forgiveness and a great reward.

13. And whether you speak secretly or openly, He indeed has full knowledge of all that is in the hearts. Would He not know Who has created? He is Very Discerning and Well-Acquainted.

Almighty is or should be aware of every hidden and apparent: when He has created them, and no one can refute this fact then how is it possible that a creator be unaware of his creation. How can He who has created all potentials and abilities, and by whose command the whole machinery of this universe is functioning be unaware of the minutest movements of His creation.

The attribute *لَطِيفٌ*, as is explained at various places in this *tafsīr*, refers to someone who is very discerning and minute in observation. The Almighty is someone Who is in fact the Discerning and the Well-Acquainted. A person's knowledge of the affairs of someone else is only partial and incomplete; however, the Almighty has created everyone and provides sustenance to each. For this reason, His knowledge encompasses the minutest of things.

It needs to be kept in consideration that one of the factors contributing to the belief of polytheism is the concept of people about the extent of God's knowledge. Until and unless the true concept of the nature and extent of God's knowledge is gauged, the fear of God cannot find its roots in a person, and neither can he have a true taste of God's trust.

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذَلُولًا فَامْشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِهِ وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ (١٥)¹⁴

After presenting the miraculous signs in the heavens as evidence for the Hereafter, here in this verse the providence found in the earth is used to adduce the same evidence.

If one reflects on the words *ذَلُولٌ* (obedient) and *مَنَاكِبُ* (shoulders), one will realize that concealed in these words is a parable. This earth has been compared to an obedient camel. The passages, valleys and mountain in the earth are likened to its shoulders. It is as if mankind is like lice which roams in the shoulders of the earth for its subsistence. These lice walk about and obtain their fodder from it.

The words *وَكُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِهِ وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ* point to the elaborate arrangement of providence; by its very existence, it invites man to benefit from it the sustenance and security it provides. He should remember that the God who has made this arrangement for him even though it was not his right will not let him go scot-free and unaccountable. Man will die one day and once again rise up before the Almighty. This is because it is totally against sense and reason that man enjoy the blessings of God and still not be held accountable for them.

14. He Who made the earth an obedient camel; so walk about in its shoulders and eat from Your Lord's subsistence and you shall then gather before Him.

أَأَمِنْتُمْ مَّن فِي السَّمَاءِ أَن يَخْسِفَ بِكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورُ (١٦)¹⁵

By referring to the weak and feeble existence of man mentioned in the previous verse, he is admonished in this verse: he who is wondering about the wide expanse of the earth like lice should not show so much conceit that when he is warned of God's punishment, he makes fun of it and questions its origin and sender.

The word *مَوْرٌ* means to move swiftly. It is used in this sense in (يَوْمَ تَمُورُ السَّمَاءُ مَوْرًا (52:9)). People have translated this word variously; however, it repeatedly comes to my mind that here it means to run in an unrestrained manner. This is because firstly, the word primarily means "swift movement" and secondly, in a previous verse the earth is likened to an obedient camel. As a result, the meaning of the word which I have adopted seems more appropriate. The overall implied meaning of the verse is that it is indeed God's blessing that He has put the earth and its resources to the service of man, and it is behaving like an obedient camel to him; however, if the Almighty lets loose the reins of this camel, man will see how swiftly it will run and no one will be able to control it.

أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ مَّن فِي السَّمَاءِ أَن يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ كَيْفَ نَذِيرِ (١٧)¹⁶

In the previous verse, it was mentioned that the punishment would come from beneath man's feet; this verse warns him of a punishment that may descend on him from above.

The word *حَاصِبٌ* refers to a stone-hurling wind. I have explained this word many times in this *tafsīr*. I have also cited in *Sūrah Dhāriyāt* my mentor Farāhī's research on this word. It has remained an important element in the destruction of previous nations. In particular, the people of Lot (sws) were destroyed by such a wind. The Quraysh often got the chance to pass by the decimated settlements of the people of Lot (sws). Hence, a mention of this incident could have been effective for the Quraysh.

The word *نَذِيرِ* is used here as a verbal noun, and its usage in this meaning is very common. The implied meaning is that today these people think that the God's warnings are a joke; however, when the punishment comes before them, they will realize how true is what they were making fun of and how dreadfully will it manifest itself before them.

15. Are you not afraid of Him Who is in the heavens that He may thrust you in the earth and it suddenly start running swiftly.

16. Are you not afraid of Him Who is in the heavens that He may send upon you a stone-hurling wind so that you know how My warning is.

وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ¹⁷ (١٨)

In this verse, the Quraysh are directed to seek a lesson from their history: if this punishment has not yet arrived, they should not make fun of it; this is no wisdom that a person only believes in what he can see; the Quraysh should seek a lesson from the accounts of other nations; these nations had also been warned like the Quraysh, but they too made fun of these warnings. At last, the very torment they were making fun of seized them.

The words كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ express the hate and disgust on the part of the Almighty; These people were left to the mercy of this punishment with great repugnance, and there was no one who could help them.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الطَّيْرِ فَوْقَهُمْ صَاقَاتٍ وَيَقْبِضْنَ مَا يُمَسِّكُهُنَّ إِلَّا الرَّحْمَنُ إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
بَصِيرٌ¹⁸ (١٩)

What is implied by this verse is that no object of this world whether it resides in the sky or in the earth is automatic or controls its self. It is the Almighty Who moves a thing or holds it. The earth is held stationery beneath our feet simply because the Almighty has willed it. Had He not held and controlled the earth, it would have swiftly run away from its orbit with all its inhabitants. Similarly, if the sky is held stationary above our heads, it is because of the Almighty. If He lets go of it, it might even fall on our heads. Here, in this verse, man is made to understand this very fact through an example: whether with wings outstretched or drawn in it is only the most Gracious Almighty Who holds the birds in the sky in both these states. If He lets go of them, they will immediately fall down. The implication is that man should analogously regard the stars and planets of this vast universe to be held by the Almighty too. If He does not hold them in this manner, only one of them would be enough to destroy this earth by falling upon it.

The verse بَصِيرٌ¹⁸ refers to the fact that it is the Most Gracious Almighty Who is watching over everything and holding it together. If He only allows a single screw of an object to be let loose, this whole world will be devastated in the blink of an eye.

17. And those also who were before them denied; so see how terrible was my curse.

18. Have they not seen the birds above them. They fly with outstretched wings, and they also draw them in. None except the Most Gracious is holding them. Indeed, He keeps a watch on all things.

أَمَّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي هُوَ جُنْدٌ لَّكُمْ يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ الرَّحْمَنِ إِنِ الْكَافِرُونَ إِلَّا فِي غُرُورٍ (٢٠)

The words *إِنِ الْكَافِرُونَ إِلَّا فِي غُرُورٍ* are an expression of regret on the wretchedness of these people: their pomp and show gave the impression that they had had built an impregnable defence around them which none could conquer; however, these people are in great deception. The slightest wave of God's punishment would reduce the edifice of their defence to bits and pieces.

أَمَّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي يَرْزُقُكُمْ إِنْ أَمْسَكَ رَزْقَهُ بَلْ لَّجُوا فِي عُتُوٍّ وَنُفُورٍ (٢١)

Contextual indication shows that the word *رَزُقٌ* (sustenance) here refers to rain which becomes a source of sustenance. This word is used thus at many places in the Qur'an.

The words *بَلْ لَّجُوا فِي عُتُوٍّ وَنُفُورٍ* are an expression of regret over their stubbornness. Even though they cannot dare reply to any of the above questions in the affirmative, they still are persistent in their rebellion and evasion from the truth. In other words, what is implied is that if these people are willing to use their intellect, they can be convinced; however, there is no remedy for obduracy.

أَفَمَن يَمْشِي مُكِبًّا عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهِ أَهْدَىٰ أَمَّن يَمْشِي سَوِيًّا عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (٢٢)

Mentioned in this verse is the reason why these people are not benefiting from the guidance revealed to them and why they are wondering about far from the truth.

The verse says that like dogs these people are slaves to their desires. Just as a dog walks face down on the ground sniffing about in the hope to find something in a similar manner these people have also entrusted their reins to their desires instead of their intellect; they too walk about face down with closed eyes following their whims and desires. He who is after his desires can never be guided. Only that person is guided who walks face up on the straight path while assessing what is on his left and right, back and front. For this very reason, the Almighty has created man such that he can walk while being erect and upright; He has not created him so that he walks face down like animals. Alas! Many human beings

19. Speak up: "What army do you have who will help you against the Most Gracious? These disbelievers are in mere deception."

20. Speak up: "Who will give you sustenance if He withholds His sustenance? In fact, these people have become persistent in rebellion and in evading the truth."

21. He who walks with his face down rightly guided or he who walks upright on a straight path?

follow animals in this regard, and in this manner lose that higher ability which is the hallmark of human beings.

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ (٢٣)

This verse deplors their deprivation and lack of treasuring the blessings of God. Instead of benefiting from these faculties which were given to them for a very noble purpose, alas they ended up following dogs and other animals, and instead of being guided by their mind and intellect became slaves of their desires.

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي ذَرَأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ (٢٤)

A reminder is sounded once again about the actual reality: if they only use their intellect, they will come to know that the God Who had sown man in the earth and Who is nurturing them, He will not let them go unaccountable; He will definitely harvest the crop He has cultivated and gather it in a field. He will then separate the chaff from the grain, and after collecting it in the granary, He will burn the chaff. Whenever a farmer sows a crop in his field, and feeds it with manure and water and protects it from birds and other animals, everyone knows without even being told that he will one day harvest it, and will separate the chaff from the grain. The question is that why do not the addressees of this verse also not understand this very reality when it is related to God. Has God created them without a purpose and all His providence that sustains them is meaningless?

It may be noted that what is mentioned by the Qur'ān in this verse in very simple words is stated in previous scriptures, in particular the Bible in various styles. This verse is also found in Sūrah Mu'minūn (23:79). I have explained it there in detail; those interested can look it up.

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٢٥) قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ (٢٦)

After hearing all this, they ask: when will the Day of Judgement come? This is their sole ground for rejecting it: if it is to come, why is it not coming, and why don't those who warn about it inform them of its exact

22. Tell them: "It is He Who has created you, and made for you ears, eyes and hearts. Yet seldom are you grateful."

23. Tell them: "It is He who has scattered you in the earth and towards Him you shall be gathered."

24. And they say: "When will this threat materialize if you are truthful?" Tell them: "Its knowledge is only with Allah and I am only an open warner."

time of arrival. In the opinion of these rejecters, since these warners do not or cannot tell them about this time, they are liars. The Prophet (sws) in return is told to merely convey to them that he is only a warner and only God knows when it will arrive; no one else knows when it will come; however, this much is certain that it will definitely come.

Since this objection raised by them is absolutely baseless, it is not answered in much detail. However, at some other places in the Qur'ān, we also find details: rejecting a thing simply because its exact time of arrival cannot be divulged is blatant foolishness. There are some many incidents of this world which we experience in our everyday lives whose exact time of appearance is known to no one, yet we all believe in their happening.

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ زُلْفَةً سَيِّئَتْ وُجُوهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَقِيلَ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَدَّعُونَ (٢٧)²⁵

The implication of this verse is that today they ask with great vanity that they be shown this Day; however, all this conceit is till the time it does not appear. As soon as it does, their faces will become dismal and they will become very apprehensive. At that time, they will be told that this is what they were demanding; so once it has appeared, why have they now become so anxious and frightened; it is being sent to them on their demand and they should now have a taste of it.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَهْلَكَنِیَ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ مَعِيَ أَوْ رَحِمَنَا فَمَنْ يُجِيرُ الْكَافِرِينَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٢٨)²⁶

When the disbelievers would be threatened with punishment, they, in order to appease their masses, would also advise them to not be over-awed by what he says; this warning is mere oratory and poetry on his part; soon his days will be over, and his call will vanish in thin air. They would go on to say that this person warns them of a punishment, whereas they are waiting for the time when his period of bloom ends. In the Qur'ān, this subject is discussed at a number of places. For example, in Sūrah Tūr, it is said:

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ شَاعِرٌ تَتَرَبَّصُ بِهِ رَبِّبُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ قُلْ تَرَبَّصُوا فَإِنِّي مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الْمُتَرَبَّصِينَ (٥٢: ٣٠-٣١)

Do they say: "He is but a poet: we are waiting for some misfortune to

25. So when they see it drawing near, the faces of these disbelievers will turn gloomy and it shall be said to them: This is what you had been asking for.

26. Ask them: "Have you ever thought that if Allah destroys me and my companions or has mercy on us who shall save the disbelievers from an afflictive doom?"

befall him?" Tell [them]: "Wait if you will; I too am waiting."
(52:30-31)

The implication of the verse under discussion is that these people as per their contention should wait for the downfall of the Prophet (sws) while Muslims wait for the destruction of these disbelievers through a divine punishment. The rejoinder from the Muslims is that they will not fight with them on this contention of theirs; only God knows whether He will destroy them or have mercy on them; they have put their trust in God and for this reason hope that He will have mercy on them; however, if supposedly, the opinion of the disbelievers is correct and these Muslims will one day face their end, then how can the disbelievers rest assured that they will not face the wrath and anger of God; Who can save them; the Day of Judgement is bound to come; the arguments which bear witness to its arrival are conclusive and irrefutable; reward and punishment are destined to take place; no one can refute or run away from them; believers and disbelievers, the pious and wicked cannot be equal; if this is an indubitable reality, then even if the Muslims are wiped out what good will this do to the fate of the disbelievers; they will have to face their fate with which they are being informed of. In other words, the disbelievers should not assure themselves on such weak and childish grounds and should fear what lies in store for them.

قُلْ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ أَمَنَّا بِهِ وَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ هُوَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ (٢٩)²⁷

Muslims are told to inform their counterparts that they can make no claim as to what will happen to them in future. Only the Almighty has knowledge of this; however, since the Almighty is Gracious and Merciful, and they have professed faith in Him and reposed their trust in Him, it is hoped that He will have mercy on them; if the disbelievers want to dispute with the believers, they should wait; soon they shall know who among the two is in grave and manifest error.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَصْبَحَ مَاؤُكُمْ غَوْرًا فَمَنْ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِمَاءٍ مَعِينٍ (٣٠)²⁸

The expression مَاءٍ مَعِينٍ refers to pure and unadulterated water.

There can be two cases in which the water sinks down into the earth.

Firstly, the water level in the earth recedes down so much that

27. Tell them: "He is the Most Gracious. We believe in Him and in Him we have put our trust so soon you will know who is in manifest error."

28. Ask them: "Speak up, if all the water you have sinks down into the earth, who will then bring out clean and pure water for you."

obtaining water from the earth becomes virtually impossible. There are many places in this world where the water level is so deep underneath that even tube wells are not very successful in acquiring it what to speak of wells.

Secondly, because of little or no rain the water of the canals, springs and rivers becomes muddy.

Here both these meanings can be attributed to the expression. However, my mind goes towards the second of these interpretations keeping in view the words مَاءٌ مَّعِينٌ.

In the previous verses, those who were making fun of divine punishment were warned of various things which were near at hand: they should not regard it to be improbable; the Almighty can seize them from wherever He likes. Here in this verse a final argument is presented: they should not go far, and just contemplate what will happen if water becomes muddy because of its level being lowered; who will then supply them with fresh and pure water. If this is true, then how can a person become fearless and unafraid of the God in Whose hands is his life-vein.

By the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah*'s *tafsīr*. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى إِحْسَانِهِ (gratitude be to God for His favour).

Rahmānābād,
22nd June 1978 AD
15th Rajab, 1398 AH
